



Get in the Box: The Impact of Male Socialization and its Relation to Conformity Among College Football Players

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Abstract

Masculinity is a social construct that allows men to use their manliness as status symbol. Often times, men who have a narrow definition of masculinity will see it as a competition where they must conform to societal norms of traditional manliness in order to prove their worth among their peers, teammates, or other men in general. In turn, this does not allow many men to develop a genuine and authentic sense of self. The level of conformity is based upon a player’s prior socialization experiences, athletic identity, and their ability to make meaning within a college environment. The data represented shows that as a whole, college football players at the division one non-scholarship level have a high rate of conformity in regards to traditional forms of masculinity. Specifically the data show the highest ratings of conformity among college football players who have a defensive position, and are first or second year student-athletes

Research Questions

- 1.) How do college football players at non-scholarship, religiously affiliated institutions define masculinity?
- 2.) Are underclassmen (Freshman and Sophomore’s) more susceptible to conforming to traditional forms of masculinity?
- 3.) Are those who play the defensive position more prone to conforming to the masculine norms of violence and power over women?

Methods

This research was compiled quantitatively by using an abbreviated version of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Parent & Moradi, 2009). The was a 33-question survey distributed electronically via email to the entire University of Dayton Varsity Football Team which consist of 96 men ranging from 19-22 years of age. The survey used Likert-style questions to measure an individuals conformity to the traditional masculine norms of Winning, Playboy, Self Reliance, Violence, Heterosexual Self Presentation, Risk Taking, Primacy of Work, Power Over Women, and Emotional Control. Using an independent sample T-Test I measured the players year of graduation and position and was able to calculate and compatr the differences in conformity.

The “man box” is a rigid set of expectations that men are expected to conform to

Act like a “Man”...

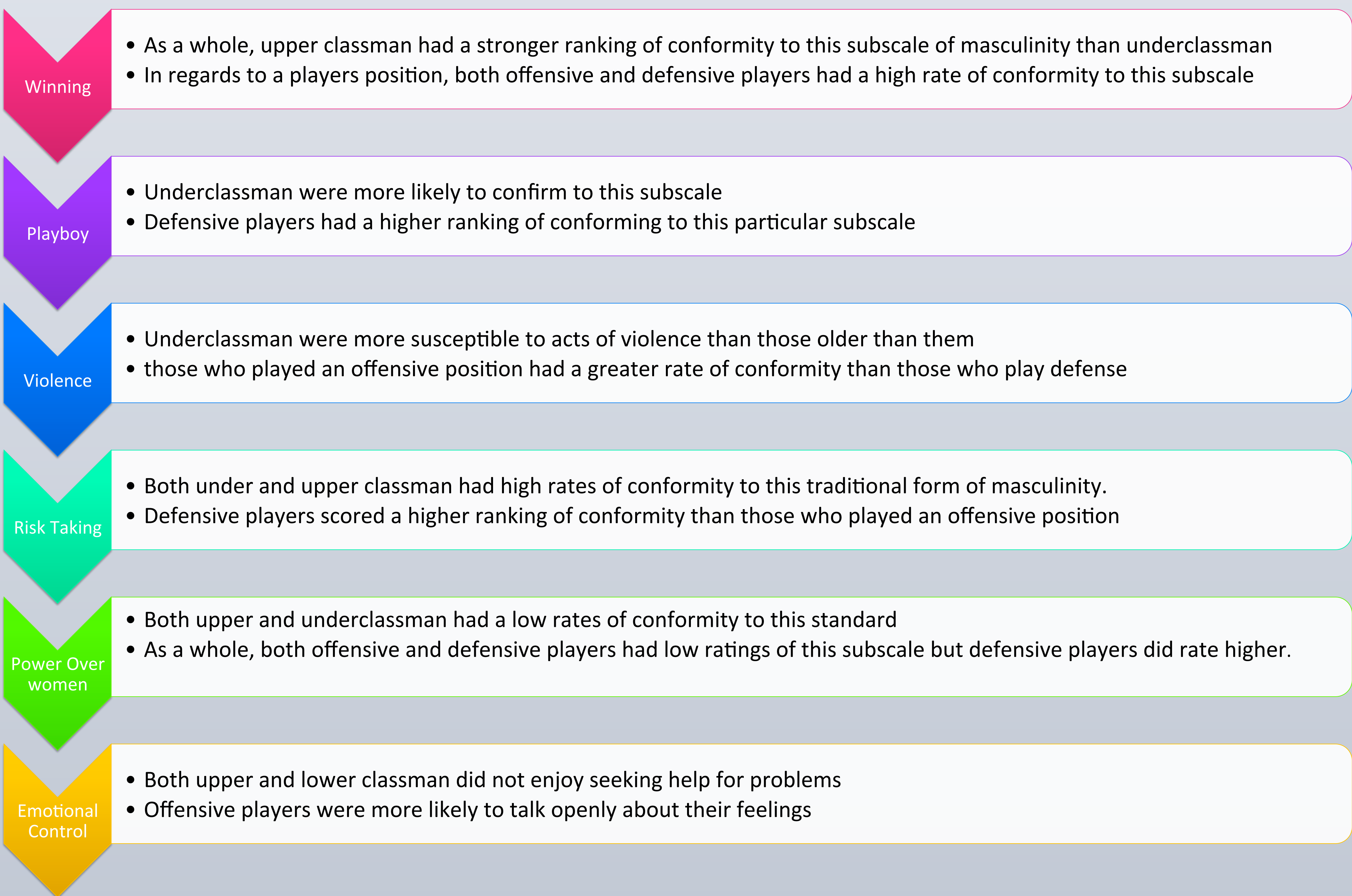
Breaking Rules, Being Disruptive, Drinking to Excess, Partying Get Turnt. Life of the Party, Easy, Being “Tough”, Stoic, Abuser Confident, Dominant, supreme, Manwhore, Competitive, Heterosexual, Hooking up, drugs, Fighting, Getting Girls/Sex, NO HOMO, whiskey bent hell bound Play Sports, Athletic, Winning is Everything, Unemotional, F.B.G.M,

Or they will treat you like this.

Don’t be a Bi*tch Pu*sy, f*g, queer, Girl, vagina, homo, douche, dick, retard, sissy, pansy, gay

Because if you don’t...

False sense of identity, Loss of friends Self doubt, Self harm Retaliation, drug abuse, Alcoholism, suicide, poor grades, loss of interest, criminal convictions, physical altercations, vandalism, dropping out, mental health issues, depression, anxiety, sickness, hatred, school shootings, prejudice, sexual conquest enhanced, loss of faith



Conclusion

College football creates an environment that not only accepts traditional forms of masculinity but also expects them. Those who chose not to identify with these specific traits are often ostracized and looked down upon socially within the context of their peers and organizations. Research shows that there is a correlation between college men who conform to traditional forms of masculinity and lower academic performances as well as a higher chance of participating in high-risk behaviors (Steinfeldt et al., 2011b). The research showed that the rate of conformity was most often based upon ones grade level rather than the position they played in regards to offense of defense. Once a player gets older there is a greater chance that they will not feel the need to conform to traditional standards of masculinity.

Implications

The research identified how a college football players age and position can have a positive or negative influence on their personal development of healthy masculine behaviors. “Men’s peer groups attempt to mirror society’s expectations of manhood and ostracize those who do not act and behave within the socially constructed hegemony” (Shepard, 2015, p. 103). Learning about the various ways that college football players have been socialized within various environments will allow readers to understand that the conformity to masculine norms is vast, complex and often times seen as an obligation.

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